

I649.1  
MCMU  
c.3

45011578

# Toddlers Exploring the World

ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

OCT 10 1996

ILLINOIS STATE LIBRARY



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 121924689



## Is Your Child Normal?

When your child is between 1 and 3 years old, she will probably be interested in everything and everyone, especially if it's new or different. She will want to be part of whatever you do. She will try to imitate you. She will also insist on trying to do many things by herself. Sometimes she will strongly resist your help.

Here are some common ways that young children explore their world:

- ◆ They climb on furniture and crawl into small places.
- ◆ They play with water, wherever they find it—in sinks, toilets, tubs, fish bowls, and puddles.
- ◆ They open cabinets and drawers, pulling out everything inside.
- ◆ They get into purses, make-up cases, and other containers.
- ◆ They scoot away in stores to touch things on the shelves.
- ◆ They approach dogs, cats, and other children to play.

## Though it can be hard to keep up with an exploring toddler, exploring is good!

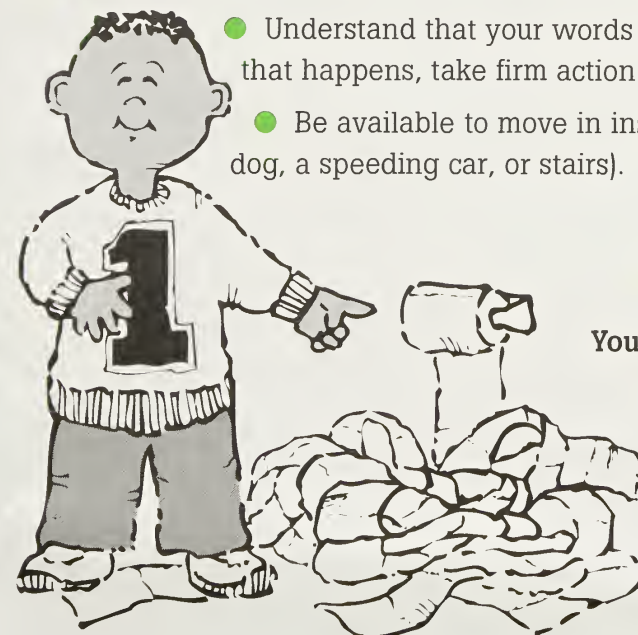
### It helps children grow in important ways.

First is the growth of intelligence. A toddler's interest in learning about the world encourages him to use his senses—tasting, touching, seeing, smelling. His senses help him understand how things are different from each other and how they work.

By trying new ways to handle objects and by asking questions, a toddler begins to learn how to solve problems. Imagine your toddler exploring with his “sippy cup” of milk. By banging it on the high chair tray, he hears what sound the cup makes. By shaking it, he learns how to tell whether it is empty. And by turning it upside down, he discovers he can make a mess!

Another result of exploring is social and emotional growth. When a toddler knows that she can explore her environment and yet return to a parent when she needs help, she becomes secure and confident.

Exploring is also vital for physical growth. Toddlers must move around to learn about their world. They develop eye-hand coordination. They also develop coordination in the large muscles used to walk, run, climb, and jump.



## Helping Your Child Explore Safely

### Toddlers try to get into everything.

Parents of toddlers often feel tired, day and night. Just watching your active little person zoom around the house can be exhausting!

Keeping a toddler safe requires constant attention, and sometimes it seems you can't relax for a minute. It is surprising how many dangerous places and objects toddlers can discover.

But the extra work it takes to encourage your child as he explores and learns is worth it. Sometimes you may want to stop your child's need to explore, but remember: exploring is necessary for a growing child. Focus your energy on providing safe places for your child to learn about his world.

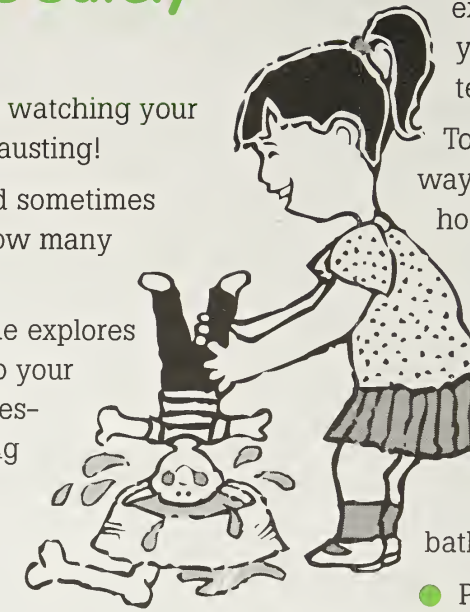
You won't have to go running after your toddler so often if you get rid of some of the dangers at home. Your toddler is just too young and too active to think about safety. She ignores things that are in the way. Bumps and falls don't stop her. You can never leave a child of this age unsupervised. However, your job will be easier if you take the following steps:

- Put away anything that your child can easily damage or that can hurt him.
- Use safety gates on stairways and porches.
- Block the way to open, unguarded windows. Fasten screens.
- Cover electric plugs.
- Keep all medicines and poisons (like cleaning products) in a locked cabinet.
- Teach your child how to climb up and go down stairs safely.
- Make safe play areas and provide safe toys.
- Understand that your words won't always stop your child from doing something unsafe. When that happens, take firm action to stop your toddler. Then tell her why you did it.
- Be available to move in instantly when action is needed (for example, around an unfriendly dog, a speeding car, or stairs).

## Understanding Play and Learning

### Your toddler is very, very active between ages 1 and 3.

She will be using her new physical and verbal skills to explore everything around her.



As he grows, your toddler will spend less time exploring and more time playing. And play is your child's “work” as he practices and masters new mental, physical, and social skills.

To help your child with her development, plan ways to explore new and interesting things at home and in your neighborhood.

- Think about new play ideas involving shapes, colors, textures, and sizes.
- Take trips to new places—stores, parks, a zoo. Talk about what you find there.
- Let your child wash plastic dishes with you, or give her toys to play with in the bathtub. (And be ready to mop up a mess!)
- Provide safe places to crawl into, hide in, climb, and explore. (For example, you could drape a bed sheet over a table to make a pretend cave.)
- Talk about what you see and hear while walking, riding the bus, or driving in the car.
- Let your child help you prepare simple food to explore all the textures, shapes, flavors, and colors. (Again, be prepared for a mess.)

## Exploring With Questions

### The toddler's curiosity knows no limits.

Even if his body is quiet, his eyes and mind are busy. He is getting better and better at talking and listening. He is watching other people. He is exploring by asking questions—about everything he sees. If you are hearing “Why? Why? Why?” from your child, remember how young children learn.

Children ask questions in bits and pieces because they need time to make sense of the answers they get. They seem to know what they can manage, and they stop asking when they have had enough. Try to keep a balance, giving your child enough information but not too much.



# Your toddler is probably busy from morning to night—turning up in places you wouldn't expect!

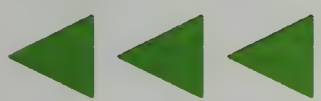
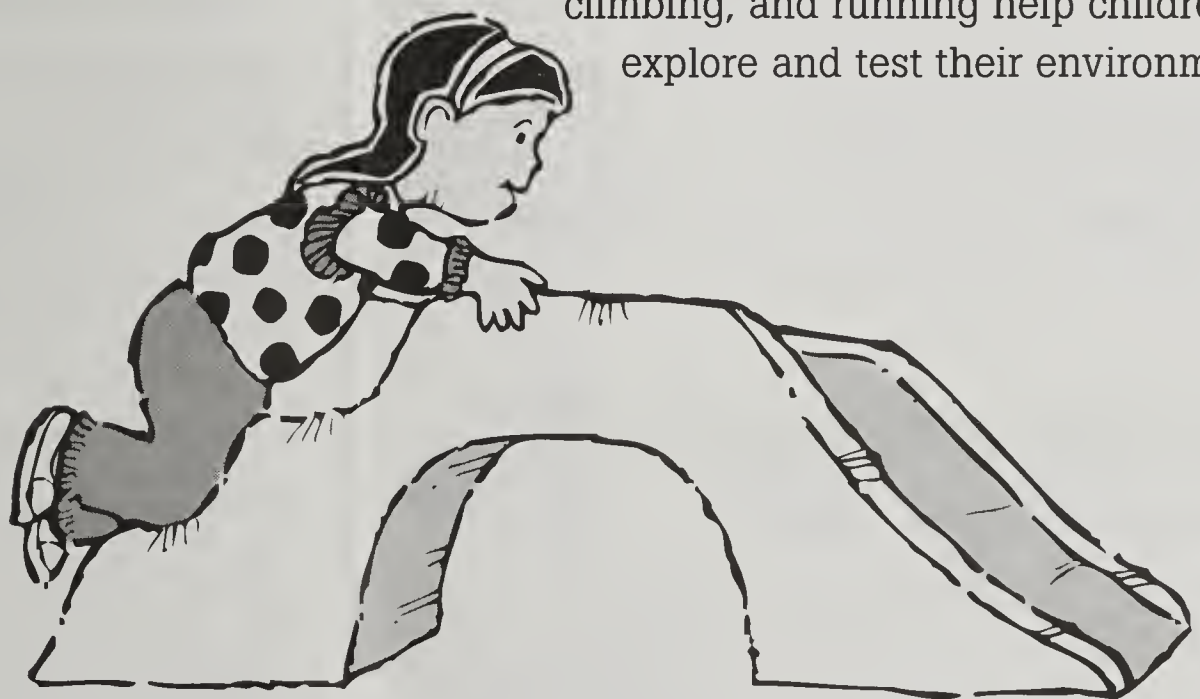
**He climbs on the kitchen table. How did he get there?  
Next he's playing in the toilet.**

And then he's off to help you with chores, and he dumps the trash on the floor.

A toddler's curiosity can be frustrating to parents!

Children learn by exploring their environment. But their exploring should happen in safe places and in ways that help them learn. As you see your child begin to discover her world, keep these ideas in mind:

- Exploring is normal and important for children to do.
- Exploring is one of the first steps in learning about objects and in learning how to solve problems.
- Children are fascinated about how things work, what they look like from the inside, and how they are made.
- Skills like pulling up, standing, crawling, walking, climbing, and running help children explore and test their environment.



MORE

ILLINOIS STATE LIBRARY



# Exploring With Books

Books can also be helpful in helping children learn about their world. Libraries and bookstores have many books to read with your toddler. Some books allow your child to do things (like touch a special place on the page). Others encourage children to explore with the characters. Both types can be enjoyed by children for a long time. Here are just a few you might look for:

*Spot's First Walk*, by Eric Hill (Putnam, 1981).

*Messy Baby*, by Jan Ormerox (Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard Books, 1985).

*What Lily Goose Found*, by Annabelle Sumera (Western Publishing, 1977).

*Pat the Bunny*, by Dorothy Kunhardt (Golden Press, 1940).

Authors: Lisa K. McMurtry, family life educator with the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service; and Geraldine G. Peeples, Extension specialist and program coordinator for the Parent Readiness Education Program, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.



**Cooperative Extension Service**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**Helping You Put Knowledge to Work**

Copyright © 1996 by University of Illinois Board of Trustees.

Authors and publishers have granted permission for copies of this work or parts of this work to be reproduced, provided that (1) copies are distributed at or below the cost of reproduction; (2) the author, the publication, and the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences and the relevant division within the College are identified; and (3) proper notice of copyright is affixed to each copy.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dennis Campion, Interim Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.



Illinois State Board of Education  
100 N. First St., Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Michael W. Skarr, Chairperson  
Joseph A. Spognolo, State Superintendent

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer  
Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois

7/96 6,000 96-473000-65-108-7300-51

**C1339E**